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Current Support Brief

MID-YEAR CROP PROSPECTS IN COMMUNIST CHINA



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MID-YEAR CROP PROSPECTS IN COMMUNIST CHINA

As of mid-July, prospects are that the early grain harvest in Communist China, consisting primarily of early rice and winter wheat, will be less than the poor crop of last year. Output of early rice will be lower than last year, and there is likely to be little if any increase in the harvest of winter wheat. The early grain crops (excluding tubers) normally account for one-fourth of the total annual production of grain. Although it is too early to determine what the fall harvest will be, the unfavorable weather conditions in portions of South, Central, and East China already have delayed the planting of rice in many areas. Low water levels in many reservoirs suggest that the water needed for the early growth of the fall rice may be deficient in wide areas of South China, whereas unusually heavy rainfall in portions of Central and East China has increased the possibility of flooding, seed rot, and insect damage.

The poor prospects for the early grain harvest are largely the result of unfavorable weather during the past 2 months, although weather conditions in the winter and early spring had already caused some deterioration in the outlook for a good crop. Since the fall of 1962, weather conditions in Communist China have been characterized by unusual extremes in rainfall and temperatures (see Figure 1). A severe cold spell occurred over large areas in January and April, a prolonged drought developed in South China, and unseasonal heavy spring rains fell in portions of East and Central China.

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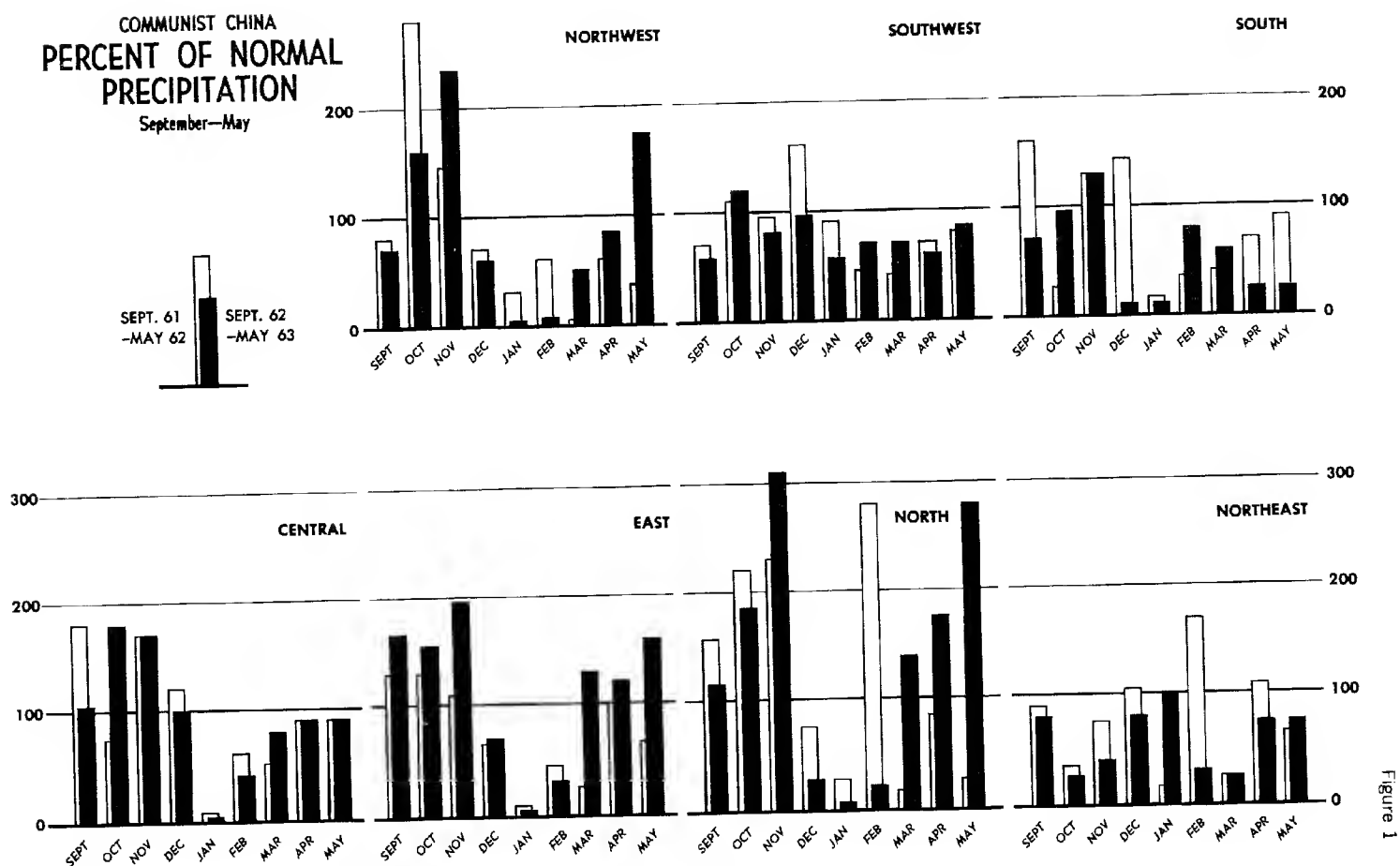


Figure 1

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1. General

The sowing period for winter wheat to be harvested in 1963, September through November 1962, was the most favorable for the past several years due to above-normal rainfall throughout most of Communist China. Beginning in December 1962, however, the favorable weather conditions deteriorated rapidly into a prolonged winter drought. Precipitation during the period December 1962 through February 1963 ranged from only 15 to 60 percent of normal throughout the major agricultural areas of China. In addition, an abnormal cold wave in January probably caused substantial losses in the winter sweet potato crop as far south as the Kwangtung coast. The probable losses in the potato crop not only would affect the supply of sorely needed foodstuffs but also would reduce the supply of potatoes for livestock feed.

The spring months, which are important for the growth of winter wheat and for the transplanting of early rice, were characterized by persistent drought in South China and the southern portion of Central China, and prolonged rainfall caused extensive flooding and waterlogging in East China and in large areas of Central and Northern China, as shown in Figure 2. This unusual weather pattern is attributed to the early dissipation of the Siberian winter high over Central and North China, resulting in an acceleration of the northern movement of the warm moist air from the South China Sea. Consequently, the warm moist air flowed across Southern China before encountering the cooler air necessary to induce precipitation and became a stationary system in the vicinity of the Yangtze River. The heavy rains that accompanied this system caused flooding and waterlogging in the Yangtze River area in April through early June. Drought conditions persisted in the important early rice regions to the south and southwest with the exception of the Szechwan Basin, where crop prospects appear to be relatively favorable.

2. Early Rice Crop

Prospects for the early rice crop, most of which is harvested in June and July and which normally accounts for about one-half of the

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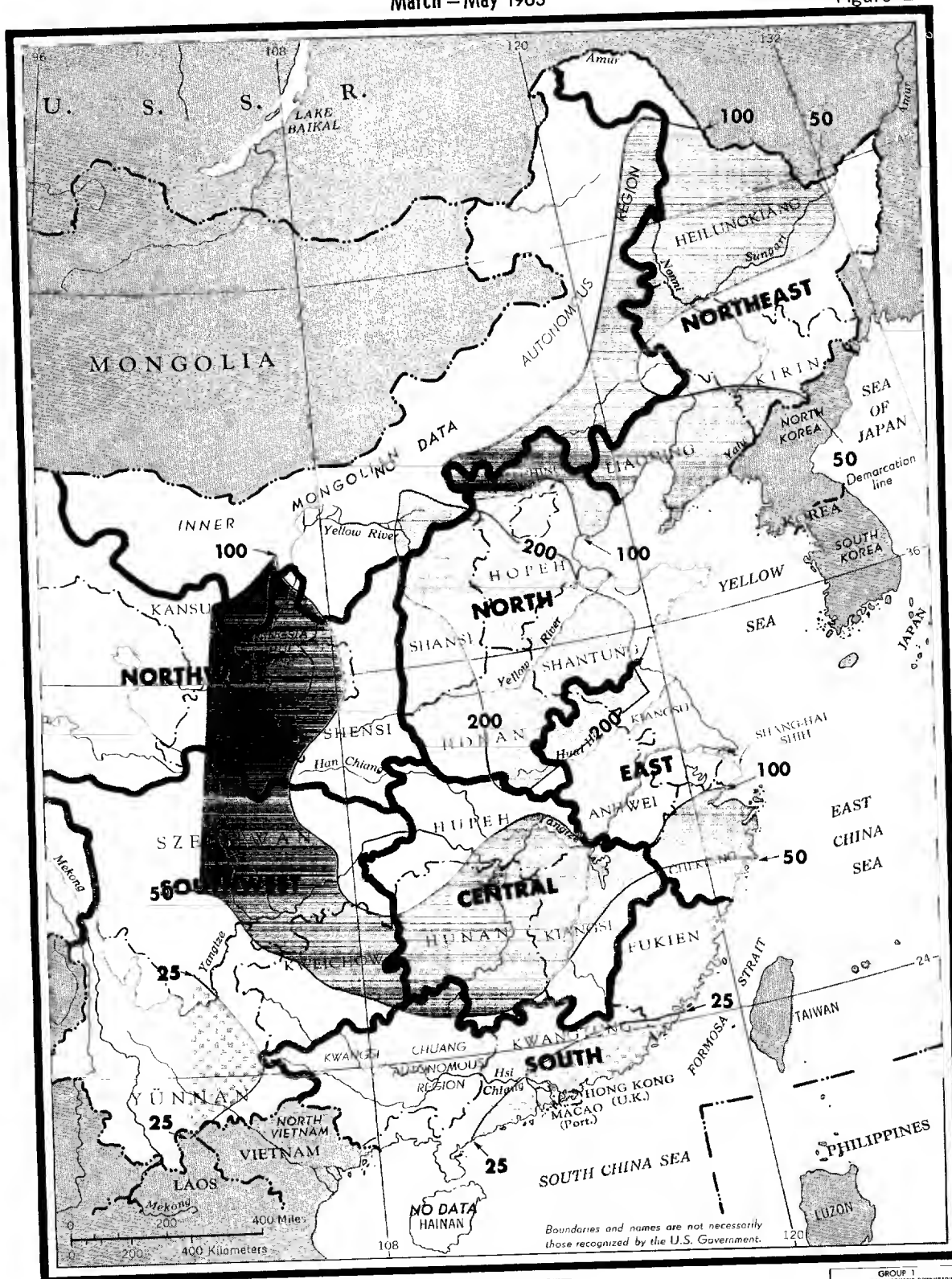
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PERCENT OF NORMAL PRECIPITATION

March - May 1963

Figure 2



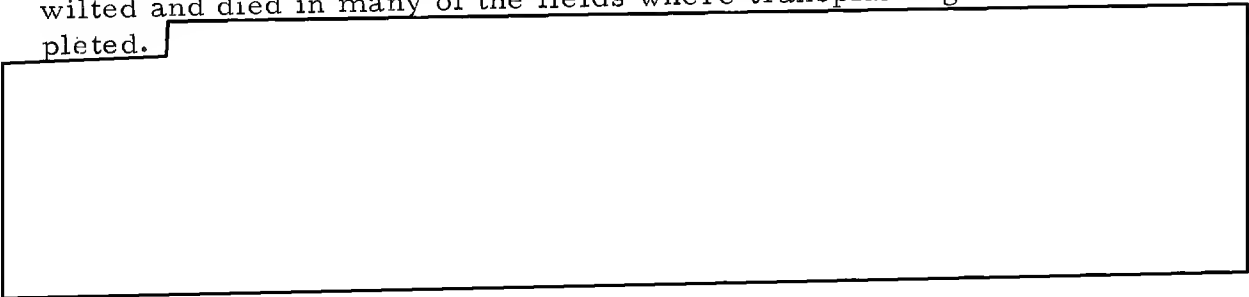
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25X1 total early grain harvest (excluding tubers), are bleak. The coastal region of Kwangtung Province and the southeastern portion of Fukien Province, the most important early rice areas in China (see Figure 3), have been subjected to prolonged drought. Various reports indicate that in many areas of Kwangtung the area sown to early rice was only 20 to 50 percent of normal because of insufficient water and that plants wilted and died in many of the fields where transplanting had been completed.



Drought also was severe in Fukien Province through May. Serious drought damage was reported in the Lunghsi Special District, an important early rice producing area in southeast Fukien. In addition, torrential rains in mid-June necessitated the "salvaging" of as much of the ripening crop as possible. The ripening rice crop in the important Changchou Plain area of Fukien also was reported to be flooded.

Drought conditions reportedly affected the early rice crop in Kwangsi and in much of southern and central Hunan and Kiangsi Provinces. It was reported on 27 April that one-fifth of all the early rice fields in Kwangsi lacked water, and rainfall has averaged less than 30 percent of normal since that time. On the other hand, the early rice crop was suffering from flooding in many areas in Hupeh, northern Hunan, and northern Kiangsi Provinces



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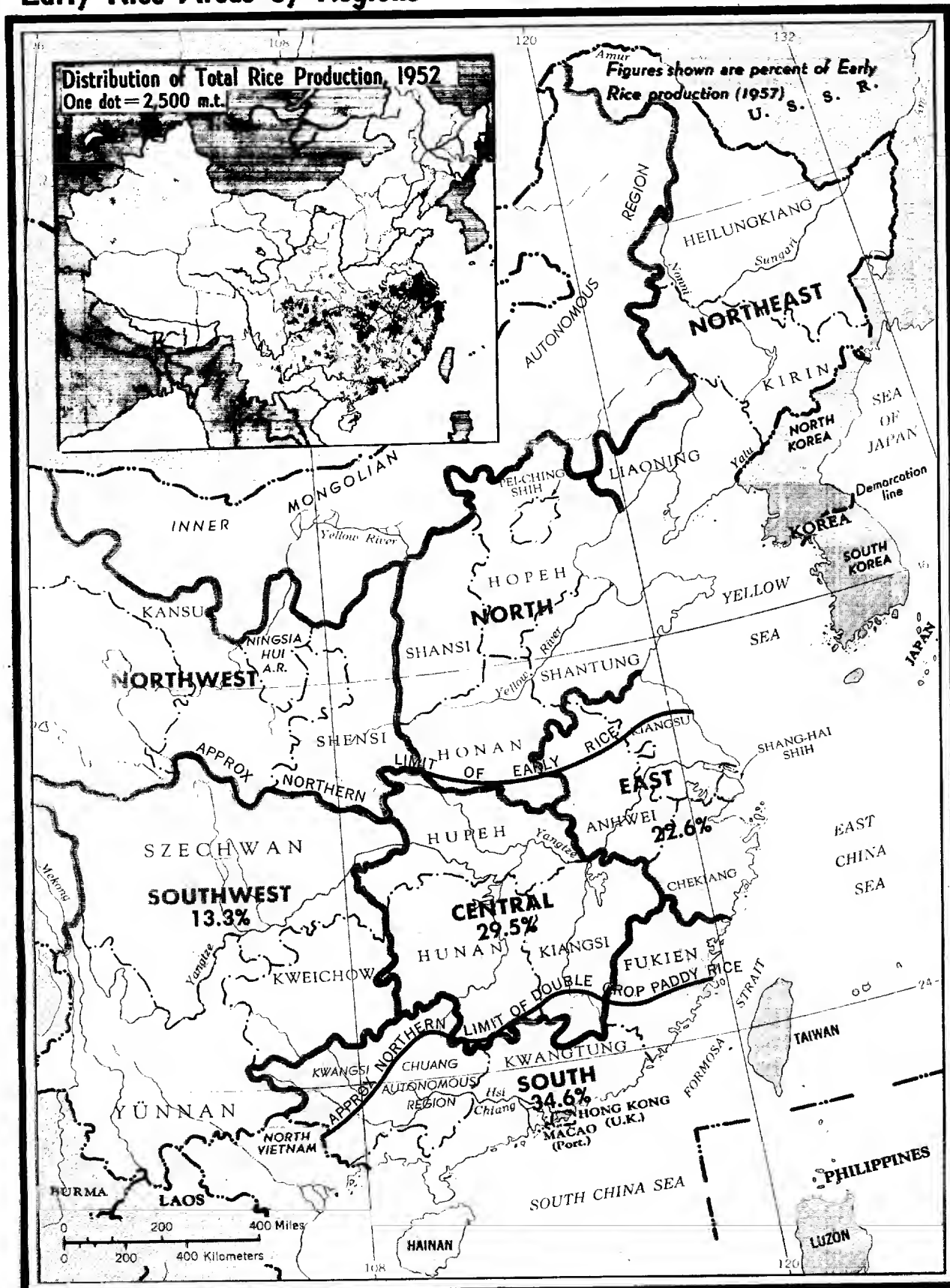
Unseasonal heavy rains combined with cool temperatures have resulted in seed rot in many areas of Eastern China. The Wu-hu Special District, which produces about three-fourths of Anhwei's grain, reported one-third of its farmland flooded in mid-April. As a result, seed decay had developed in both the early and the mid-season rice crops.

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Communist China: Early Rice Areas by Regions

Figure 3



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Conditions in Szechwan, which normally produces about 13 percent of China's early rice, are believed to be relatively favorable, although it was reported on 6 June that there was some concern over drought.

3. Winter Wheat Crop

Moisture conditions for the 1963 winter wheat crop, most of which is harvested in May and June, have been generally more favorable than last year, but little if any increase in winter wheat production is anticipated. The winter wheat acreage is probably the same, or slightly less than, the abnormally low area of last year. The winter wheat acreage in the area south of the Yangtze was deliberately reduced to free the land for more rice. Any increase in the winter wheat acreage in North China was planned, apparently to compensate for the reduced acreage in the South. Cold weather and dampness, however, restricted the winter wheat acreage in Shantung and Honan, which normally account for about two-thirds of North China's winter wheat acreage (see Figure 6). Sowing also was limited somewhat in northern Kiangsu and northern Anhwei for the same reason. Although ample moisture was available for sowing over most of North China, a drought, which reportedly was the worst in 40 years, persisted from the summer of 1962 through February 1963 in the northern extremity of the winter wheat belt, including the Peking area.

The earlier favorable prospects for winter wheat in North China were lessened somewhat by prolonged rainfall and unseasonal cold during the critical flowering and harvesting periods. Unseasonal cold in early April reportedly damaged the crop as far south as northern Anhwei. The prolonged period of above-normal rainfall in North China reduced the yield in some important areas. Floods were reported in southwest Honan, and efforts were being made to salvage as much of the winter wheat as possible. The wheat crop in Shantung was reported to be only "fair." There have been numerous reports of damage to the winter wheat crop in portions of East and Central China because of flooding and waterlogging.

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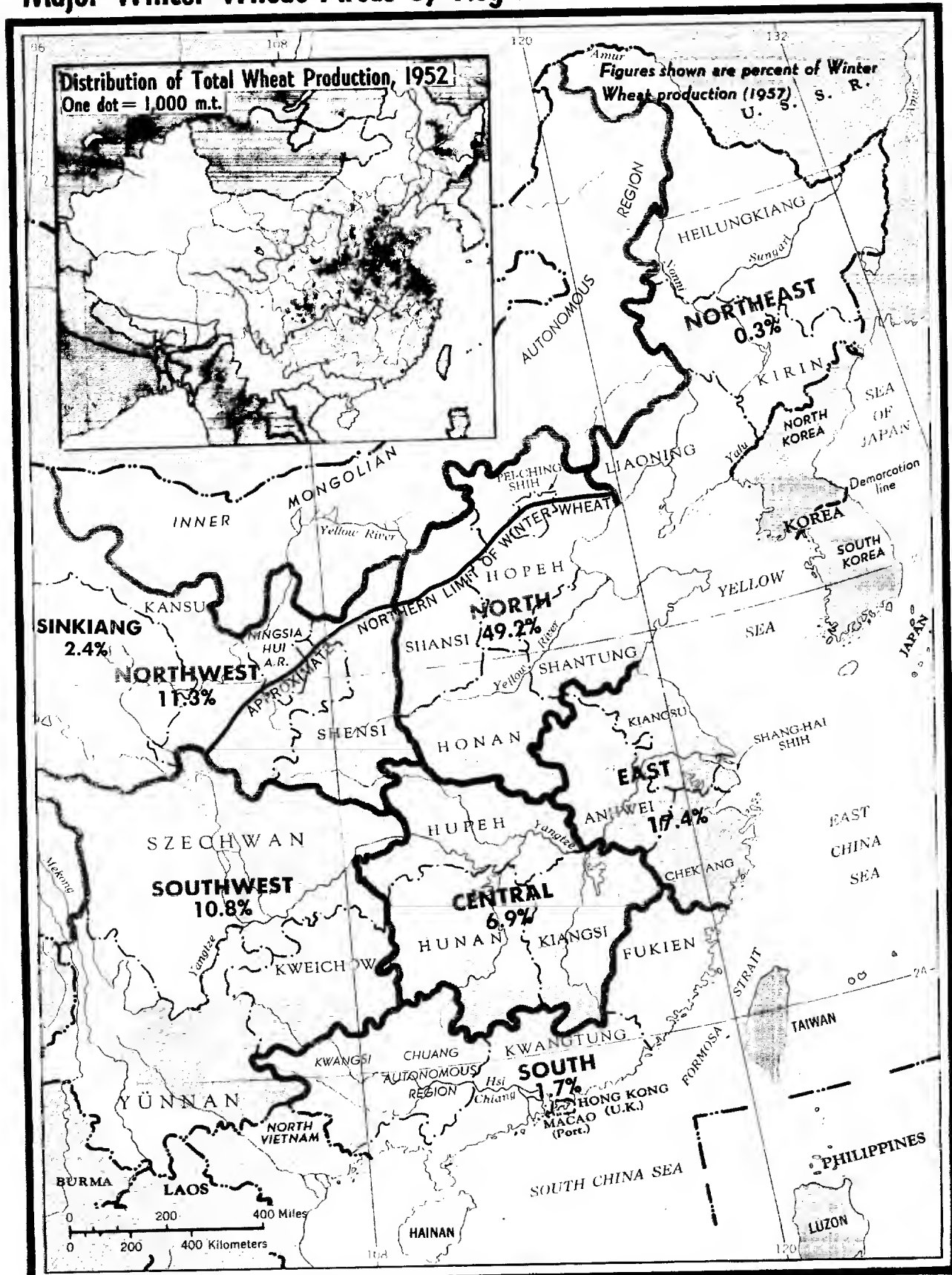
Communist China:

Major Winter Wheat Areas by Regions

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Figure 6



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A relatively good wheat crop is expected in Szechwan and in the north-western provinces. These provinces, however, normally produce somewhat less than one-fourth of China's winter wheat.

4. Subsidiary Foods

The output of vegetables and other subsidiary foods in Communist China probably was not as seriously affected by adverse weather conditions as the early grain crops. The intensive care of these private plot crops by the peasants, often to the detriment of the collective sector, probably will provide a continuing supply of vegetables throughout the summer months and periodic supplies of poultry, meat, and fruits.

5. Preliminary Prospects for Autumn-Harvested Crops

Reports from Yunnan, Anhwei, Kwangtung, Hupeh, and Hunan Provinces indicate that attempts are being made to expand the acreage of intermediate and late rice in order to recoup the losses sustained by the early grain crops. However, unseasonal flooding and waterlogging in many areas of the Yangtze Valley reportedly delayed transplanting. The success or failure of the late harvest in areas of the Yangtze Valley where the planting of crops has been delayed will be determined not only by precipitation in the remainder of the growing season but also by the advent of the first frost. Inadequate rainfall through June in South China probably affected the transplanting of the late rice crop. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] as far north as central Hunan, reservoirs and other catchments were empty or had low water levels. If normal weather prevails during July and August, South China will continue to experience a shortage of moisture, whereas an excess amount of moisture will persist in portions of East and Central China.

The generally above-normal rainfall throughout Northern China since March probably has improved the prospects for soybeans and miscellaneous grain crops which are harvested in September and October. Prospects for the late crops in Szechwan are believed to be good, but drought conditions in other provinces of Southwest China may affect the crops in those areas. In Northeast China, precipitation since early spring also has been generally below normal.

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The prospects for an increase in the cotton crop also appear to be dim, and output may be no greater than the very poor return of the past few years. Although the plan calling for large increases in cotton acreage apparently was fulfilled, the cotton area has remained well below the annual level for 1957-59. For example, Shantung, the third largest cotton-producing province (normally accounting for 13 percent of the country's total cotton acreage), has attained only about two-thirds of its previous acreage level. Difficulties in many of the major cotton-growing regions have been reported since April. Excessive rainfall in many of the major cotton areas during April and May has resulted in seed rot and in weed and insect damage. In Honan, China's leading cotton producer, some 200,000 hectares of cotton had to be partly replanted. It was reported that about 45 percent of the cottonfields in 42 hsien in this province were damaged.

Analyst:

Coord:

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